

Minutes
Skateboard Park Advisory Committee
February 13, 2006

Committee Members Present: Keith Strobel, Christian Poules, Matthew Johnston, Dan Hughes, John Carr, Kim Schwarzkoph, Scott Shinn

Guests: Hans Bjordahl, Kate Martin, Ryan Barth

Staff: Susan Golub

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Public Comment – Pre-Meeting

Hans Bjordahl

Hans requested clarification on the 2/9/06 Board of Park Commissioners decision to move the Lower Woodland skatepark back to the chips site. Per the post-vote discussion at that meeting, he wanted to know if Parks would be reopening the siting discussion with the skateboarding community and the neighborhood, or building the skatepark at the chips site.

Regarding ongoing momentum for the skatepark, Hans mentioned that the Lower Woodland neighborhood organization compiled a mailing list of approximately 90 people that could be helpful for public communication about the project. He expressed an interest in continued involvement in the skatepark from the neighborhood and direction from the SPAC on the needs of the skateboarding community.

Kate Martin

Kate expressed concern about the Lower Woodland skatepark, and objected to building it at the chips site due to lack of skateable square footage, encroachment on the existing BMX area, excessive shade and tree litter, and proximity of illicit activities in the adjacent wooded area. Moving the skatepark elsewhere would be better than building it at the chips site. Crown Hill School is an example of a better location. A sane planning process that starts again at the beginning would be better than the current process.

Kate also requested a new Parks SPAC liaison, or outsourcing the Parks staff role in the skatepark planning process to a consultant.

Updates

Ballard Bowl

Matt reported that the Ballard Bowl is a huge success, with many spectators enjoying the skate bowl in addition to the skaters, and reiterated the need for more garbage cans.

Regarding rules signage, Susan and Matthew worked with Dewey Potter on the language for the sign. The Parks sign shop is currently producing it, with installation to follow soon.

Regarding the March 4 grand opening, John will speak on behalf of skaters at the ceremony.

River City Skatepark

Kim reported that the project currently has \$50K, which is almost one third of the funds required, and that more grant applications are pending. So far, in addition to other fundraising activity, the project has received \$10K from the Tony Hawk Foundation, \$12.5K from Safeco, and \$10K from the SODO Rotary. Additional donations of materials and services have allowed the project to make good progress, and the efforts of many middle school students are helping to drive it as well. Information about the project is available at <http://www.rivercityskatepark.com>, and a second fundraiser will occur at the Showbox in the near future.

Skatepark Resolution

John reported that the Parks, Neighborhoods and Education subcommittee will vote on the initiative this Wednesday, February 15. Public comments are welcome at the beginning of the meeting. In the current draft of the legislation, the completion dates have been pushed back from previous versions, and would provide the consultant with nine months to develop the comprehensive citywide plan. \$100,000 to fund the initiative was already approved in 2005. If the legislation passes, suggestions for Task Force members will be accepted, with the criteria specified in the legislation to help guide the selection process, and the City Council's Parks, Neighborhoods and Education Committee will hire the consultant in conjunction with the Task Force and Parks.

Susan reported that Susanne Friedman has been selected as the Parks Department liaison to the Task Force and the consultant.

Lower Woodland Skatepark

Susan reported that the final public design meeting for Lower Woodland will occur Wednesday, March 8 at 6PM at the Green Lake Library. Per direction from Kim Baldwin, Wally Hollyday will present a schematic diagram for a 17,000 square foot skatepark at the chips site.

Matt noted that the last final public design meeting was usurped by the location discussion and debate and did not focus on the design details as much as it should have.

Regarding the 2/9/06 Park Board decision, Matt noted that the decision to go back to the chips site based on neighborhood opposition caused delay and discouragement, and that the amount of public skatepark square footage in Seattle has actually decreased over the last two years. He expressed concerns about the precedent that this decision has set, the willingness of the Parks Department to relocate a skatepark due to vocal neighborhood outcry, and the trend toward selecting skatepark sites in places that no one supports simply because no one will oppose them either.

Scott asked: What happens now? He observed that a fundamental difference of opinion on these issues exists, and that there are reasons to build skateparks right the first time, and reasons to just get them built at all. Reopening the site selection process will cause unwanted delay, but there is also a need to select better sites using a set of criteria, a reasonable range of site options, and a transparent public process. In desirable locations, there will always be opposition to skateparks by someone, and a sane process would assume and account for this reality.

Regarding the Park Board's decision, Scott noted that the Board has now approved the chips site three times, and argued that the post-vote discussion initiated by Commissioner Holme regarding the SPAC's input on the issues will probably not be incorporated into Superintendent Bounds' final decision. Parks will not agree to any other location but the chips site for this skatepark. Further, in the absence of a site plan, there is no definition of what the chips actually is, and Parks is already moving forward with the final design meeting, so the SPAC position does not matter.

Regarding the Phase II Neighborhood Matching Fund Grant for the Lower Woodland skatepark, Scott questioned how many square feet of skatepark the chips site will actually support, and if the grant project should occur at all. As the Project Manager for the grant, Scott reported that the Letter of Intent is currently under review by the Department of Neighborhoods, with written comments to be received by March 15 and the full grant application to be submitted by April 3 if the Department approves the Letter and requests it.

Matt argued that the SPAC should take a position on the Park Board's decision, that recommending a new site selection process will delay the overall skatepark process even more, but that accepting the chips site will also settle on an inferior location for the skatepark. Additional consideration should be given to the square footage available at this site.

John noted that the existing \$850,000 budget for this skatepark will still design and build 17,000 square feet of skatepark given Superintendent Bounds' commitment at the 2/9/06 Park Board meeting to provide funding for any redesign costs. John concurred that there is no site plan for the chips site, but argued that this could allow for expansion of the site in the future. He also supported no encroachment on the existing BMX turnaround area. This situation is not perfect, but it is better than no skatepark at all.

Susan reiterated that Wally Hollyday has been directed to redesign the skatepark in the chips site with the same 17,000 square foot footprint as before, and that final public comments on this design will be accepted at the 3/8 meeting. She will also provide the current bubble diagram for the chips site to SPAC members.

Dan argued that the Park Board approved the chips site without using any site selection criteria, and that the final public design meeting should be kept on task. A recent local example of a design meeting that stayed on task was the Dahl Playfield meeting, which occurred in a school during the early afternoon, attracted many kids to participate in the focused process, and requested that community members with unrelated concerns take their discussion out in the hallway while the design meeting progressed.

SeaSk8

Susan reported that the consultant to the Mayor is currently reviewing all prospective sites and developing a rationale for the final relocation site selection. Results will be provided to the Mayor in March, with a City Council vote to follow.

BMX in Skateparks

John reviewed the results of the 1/17 SPAC meeting, which supported a blanket ban on bikes in Seattle skateparks. He drafted and circulated a final document expressing this position on behalf of the SPAC. The members reviewed and gave final approval to this policy document.

SPAC Chair

John was unanimously elected SPAC Chair until March 2007.

Feature Discussion – Street versus Transition

John submitted a draft of the proposed skatepark terrain position paper for review. The intended audience for the paper will be skatepark designers and citizens interested in the process.

Scott argued that the Task Force should develop an equitable master plan for division of terrain across the city.

Matt expressed support for specification of the intended audience for the position paper.

Dan argued that it is difficult to define street and transition skate terrain, and reiterated the example of a flyout as fusion terrain.

John noted that skatepark designers will eventually decide the implementation of skate terrain on a park-by-park basis, and that the position paper will only provide general guidelines for these decisions.

Keith supported the idea of general guidelines, and argued that it is best to keep the specific details open to designer interpretation.

Kim argued that separation between beginner and advanced skateboarding areas is the most important aspect of the position, and that separation between street and transition skating is also important.

Matt supported the idea of separation by ability level, and argued that the position paper should define this.

Dan argued that the design input process should accommodate the concerns of children and teens, and reiterated that public design meetings occurring at schools during the early afternoon will best achieve this goal.

John argued that the Task Force should also develop planning and design guidelines that encourage separation of skating by ability level. He suggested that the next SPAC Feature Discussion should focus on the topic of public process for siting and planning skateparks. A formal vote on the Street versus Transition issue will occur at the next SPAC meeting.

Scott reiterated his support for an 80/20 square footage ratio in favor of street skating, with a 50/50 ratio for costs due to the popularity of street skating among youth and its larger requirements for flat space. Additionally, as the citywide skatepark planning process evolves, he supported refined data collection efforts to determine which skateparks should contain which types of features based on the actual user demographic.

Dan recommended that references to “vert” skating should be consistently changed to “transition” skating for clarity. Regarding the cost of street skating features, he argued that inclusion of exotic materials such as granite and marble in the design will increase construction costs.

Matt reiterated his support for a 60/40 square footage ratio in favor of street skating, noting that this position would provide a more equitable distribution of terrain and respect the “middle ground” of the ongoing debate about which style skaters prefer.

Next SPAC Meeting

The SPAC meetings will now occur on the second Monday of each month, with the next meeting to occur at 7 PM on March 13 in the Parks Administration Building, 100 Dexter Avenue.

Public Comment – Post-Meeting**Ryan Barth**

Ryan requested clarification regarding the next steps for the Lower Woodland skatepark location and the overall process of how the SPAC works. SPAC members attempted to answer his questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.